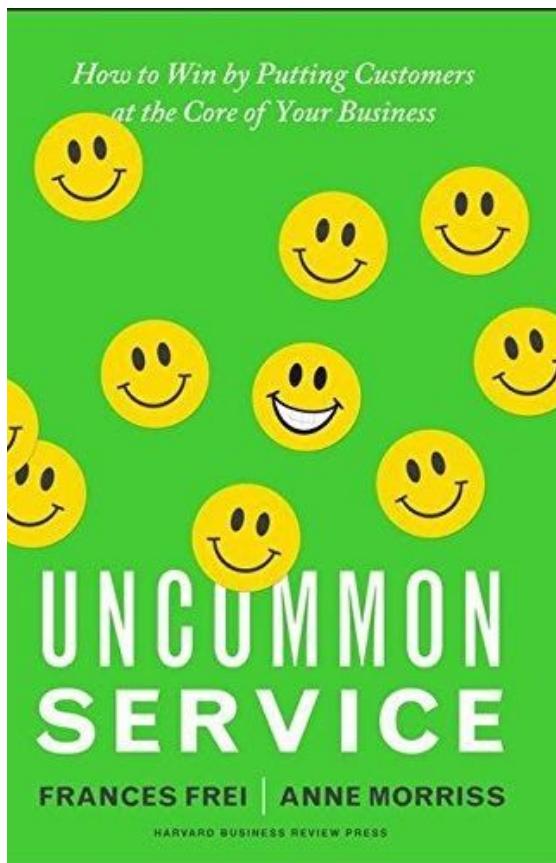


# Uncommon Service

Frances Frei, Anne  
Morriess



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## Book Summary

Uncommon Service (by Frances Frei and Anne Morriess) is a great book that talks about customer service and how it can be grown as a reliable system in businesses.

I've been running a customer service-oriented business for 17 years, and found that what Frei and Morriess talk about are right on-point. In order to provide consistently excellent customer service, it must be part of your business model. Customer service is not an afterthought and must be designed to be profitable, sustainable, and scalable in order to succeed.

You'll need to answer these questions to design your own customer service system:

1. Which specific attributes of service are you competing on?
2. How is the excellence paid for?
3. Are employees set up for success?
4. How are customers managed and trained?

## The Four Service Truths Of Customer Service

### You can't be good at everything

You will need to make sacrifices by underperforming on dimensions that your customers value less. Commerce Bank bucked the trend of the industry by having extended hours daily and friendly, helpful tellers. However, it did not offer the best rates.

Find out what your customers value most.

### **Someone has to pay for it**

Your service model must be reliably funded. The 4 funding mechanisms are:

#### ***Charging a premium, but in a palatable way.***

In the example prior, Commerce Bank pays for daily extended operating hours by offering the worst interest rates in the industry. However, customers are more willing to accept this than to pay an additional fee for “good service”.

#### ***Reducing costs in a way that improves service.***

Progressive Insurance came up with the idea of immediate-response vans for auto accidents to validate accidents and combat fraud. This was not inexpensive, but it greatly reduces fraud, disputed claims, and legal fees. It improves customer convenience and also humanises the company at the same time.

***Improving service in a way that reduces costs.*** Intuit asked their software developers take customer support calls. This allowed their developers to get insights for product improvements without the expense of market research. In return, the customers also got knowledgeable answers from the developers who knew the product inside-out.

#### ***Getting customers to do some of the work.***

Ochsner Health System created a patient portal that patients could use to schedule their own appointments. This improved customer satisfaction from 50% to 90% while halving the no-show rate.

### **It's not your employees' fault**

Hiring best-of-the-best employees in terms of attitude and aptitude is expensive. Since attitude is paramount in customer service, consider simplify your products so that aptitude isn't that necessary.

### **You must manage your customers**

If not designed for, customers will:

1. Come at any time
2. Ask for anything they want
3. Possess varying levels of knowledge
4. Put in varying levels of effort
5. Prefer varying levels of quality

Therefore, you need to design for these attributes:

1. Service only selected customers
2. Train customers to know what you can offer
3. Give your customers less work to do
4. Hand-hold and guide your customers
5. Provide great value

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